

A few days ago, I found my old diary under my bed in the creaky old house I grew up in. I was cleaning out my bedroom because my parents finally decided to move out, so I was helping them. I looked at the diary and sighed. I knew there had to be something in there about my first crush or the day I kicked Craig Fuller's butt for cheating on my best friend. But it turns out, there was a whole chapter of my life that I would relive once I read it. The diary was entitled *My Notebook* and it began with an entry dated back thirteen years ago, the year of sixth grade. I would never forget those treacherous months of sixth grade. The first entry began...

February 6th, 1999, 9:57pm

Dear Diary,

Today was the worst day of my life. First off, I forgot my homework at school yesterday and I was going to get another late assignment. Then, mom and dad were fighting all night so I had to take the responsibility of giving Mia a bath, making dinner and putting Collin and Jack to sleep. I was so busy with all of that crap that I forgot to study for the science test tomorrow. Great, another failed test. School keeps getting worse and worse. These girls at school are so mean. They make fun of my clothes because they aren't the latest and greatest. But I don't have the best clothes because mom just lost her job. But the girls at school don't seem to care. Every morning I have to force myself out of bed to go to school. I don't even want to know what rude remarks they're going to say about me tomorrow. Will it be, my hair isn't curled? Or maybe, my shoes aren't Uggs? Or will it be that I'm too skinny? I don't even want to think about it. I will see how tomorrow goes.

February 7th, 1999, 3:34pm

Dear Diary,

I feel like curling up in a ball and rolling away down a hill. As soon as I got to school this morning, those girls came up to me and stole my book bag. "Hey. That's mine! My mom made it for me!" I yelled. "Yeah, and? It's so hideous!" Then Kendall McGavin threw it in a mud puddle. "Consider this a favor, I just saved you from a lot of people making fun of you. You're welcome," she said. Can you believe it? And then she told the whole school that I wet my pants because she pushed me into a puddle. I'm thinking about telling the counselor, but if I do, the girls might make fun of me even more. I just don't know what to do. I'm afraid of getting myself in too deep. I wish I could just be invisible.

February 8th, 1999, 6:36pm

Dear Diary,

School has gotten worse! I can't believe it, but now my friends, Emily and Theresa, are becoming "buds" with the enemy and now I have no one. I feel so alone, and even when I stand in a crowded room, I still feel isolated from the rest of the world. Now that my friends are the bullies, I have no one else in the whole sixth grade to be friends with. I wish I could hide from the world and never be found.

February 9th, 1999, 8:36am

Dear Diary,

As soon as I got on the bus this morning, I couldn't hold myself together. I fell apart in front of everyone. I starting crying so hard I got a headache. When I got off the bus, the girls and my so called friends, walked up to me and took the key to my house. I yelled at them to give it back but instead, they laughed. For the first time in my life, I stood up for myself. I threatened to tell the teacher and then kick their butts, but instead of backing down, they called over to the "Jocks of Sixth Grade". They all marched over to me and punched me. That was the first time I had ever been beaten up and my so called friends, just watched it happen. I was left outside in the rain, lying on the cement, crying my heart out. When I finally got the strength to stand up, I did and I sprinted home. Luckily mom and dad weren't home so I had time to pack. I couldn't stand being bullied one more minute and I didn't want to tell my parents so I decided to run away. I packed some food and water and some clothes. I put on my coat and opened my umbrella and I was off. I didn't know where I was going but at least I was leaving this terrible place.

February 10th, 1999, 6:00pm

Dear Diary,

I found a place to stay. With my Aunt Judy, in Tennessee. I stole some money from my mom's stash, even though I felt bad. Then I took the first train that left Chicago yesterday and I made my way to her house. She was so surprised to see me but I begged her not to call my parents. I told her I just needed to get away. We talked and had dinner once I got there and she made me feel welcome. I was hoping she wasn't going to address the fact that my eye was swollen from the punch, but she asked anyways. I told her the whole story of the bullies and when I was finished, she took me in her arms and

held me tight. I had never felt so loved since my parents started fighting. It was the best feeling in the world, being loved. I fell asleep in her arms apparently, as she wrote me a note, because she knows about my diary keeping. I finally felt at home with her.

February 11th, 1999, 11:16am

Dear Diary,

I woke to the smell of warm waffles and fresh fruit. When I got to the kitchen, I saw my aunt setting the table. She had made breakfast for me! Ever since my mom lost her job, all we've had to eat at home was carrots, grapefruit, celery, peanut butter, bananas, some raw noodles and a few stale bagels. So for the past few weeks I've had nothing but peanut butter with bananas on a bagel for breakfast because I hate everything else. She made my favorite, strawberry Belgian waffles. Yum! Then she gave me a glass of orange juice and exactly eleven slices of watermelon, my age! For the first time in three months, I finally felt at home. When my aunt finally sat down, she got a call from my mom. I didn't like that she picked it up, but she did. My mother sounded so worried on the phone, but I begged my aunt to tell her I wasn't with her.

When my aunt hung up she said to me in her Tennessee accent, "Young lady, I know you are having some troubles in the Windy City but I can't keep lying to your mama like that. You have to call her and tell her you're safe, or I'll send you back."

I was so devastated, I finally got to feel like I belonged, and now I had to leave this wonderful place! It was the worst. But I worked up the nerve to call my mama two hours later. The conversation didn't last long. "Mom?" I asked into the phone.

"Christie? Oh my god! Christie! Where are you? Are you okay? Oh honey I've missed you so much!"

"I'm fine, mama. I'm with Aunt Judy, in Tennessee."

"What??? Judy said you weren't there when I called this morning."

"I asked her to lie for me."

"Well why would you pack up and leave like that? Do you know how dangerous that is?"

"Yes mama, I'm sorry."

"Well, you can come home now. I found a job. As a teacher in Texas."

"Texas?"

"Yes. I'm sorry, but everything is going to get better and you still have until February 28th. So what do you say? Now that you've learned your lesson, do you want me to pick you up?"

"No mama, I'll pack up my stuff and come back by myself. I will see you later tonight, love you."

She hung up the phone, and I went back to eating my breakfast. I was very surprised she was actually going to let me come home alone.

February 12th, 1999, 7:46am

Dear Diary,

I don't have much time to write, since the train leaves at 7:55am. Right now, my aunt's walking me to the train. I'm happy to go back, but I'm not looking forward to school. Well I'm going to have to write in a little while, I'm about to board. Talk to you later.

Later that night...

Well, I'm back. I got home safe and sound. I reunited with my dad, Mia, Jack and Collin. I was really happy to see all of them. I kept avoiding their questions like, "How was school before you left?", "Was there a reason you left?" Or, "Was I okay?" I never answered them until the big question came out. My dad asked, "Christie, why did you run away?"

I dropped the bomb on them. My heart poured out as I told them everything, about the girls, the book bag, the beating, everything. My parents had no idea that I was ever being bullied, and if they had, they would have done everything in their power to stop it, even if it meant coming to school to protect me. So it was settled, my parents and I would go to the counselor tomorrow. For once, my parents weren't fighting about the loss of a job or not enough food in the house, everyone was just, perfect.

February 13th, 1999, 2:27pm

Dear Diary,

Well we talked to the school counselor today, and he said that they had never had that big of a bullying problem at West Middle School. Since the boys hit me, he said they were going to be suspended for three weeks. Great, I'd leave before they came back. And for the girls, he had a talk with them and said they would back off completely. For once in my life, I felt safe and secure, right there, with my family.

February 28th, 1999, 9:45pm

Dear Diary,

Guess what? School has gotten so much better! After I talked to the counselor, the girls stopped being mean. They stopped talking to me which is great! And the boys haven't been at school so they aren't there to beat me up! Now that I don't have to worry about turning a corner and being bullied, I've tried to catch up on my homework. I even turned around all my grades and now I have a B+ in every subject. I'm glad that I'm leaving this place because now that I've gotten past the bullies, I've really made friends with the nice girls in my class, Aria and Gianna. I really don't want to leave them behind, but I think Texas will be a well needed fresh start for me. I can't wait! We will live in Dallas, Texas. Dad says he will try his hardest to take me to a Dallas Cowboys' football game once every few months. I think I will be okay tomorrow, and if I'm not, I can look back and find the good in this chapter of my life; my friends, my beloved family, and the one who helped me the most, Aunt Judy.

And that's where the diary entries ended. No more entries that had to do with the bullying. After I finished that last page, I couldn't help the tears. They fell out of my eyes uncontrollably and the memories flooded back. I cried out in pain as the hurt of the punch came back to my mind. I never regretted talking to the counselor. Talking to someone helped me through that very tough time in my life, and I will never forget the way I felt, when I knew everything was finally going to go back to the way it used to be. Great.